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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1920
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 4345
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3803
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 3711
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA PRIORITY 3134
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 3445
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1340
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0116

S E C R E T BEIRUT 000709

SIPDIS

STATE FOR DS/CC; D/DSS/ITA; DS/IP/NEA; NEA/EX
POSTS FOR RSO; S/ES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2018
TAGS: [CASC](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: BEIRUT EAC MEETING MAY 16, 2008 (1600 EST)

REF: BEIRUT 00651

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reason 1.4
(b) and (d).

Summary

[11](#). (C) At 1730 local time (1030 EST) on May 16, 2008, CDA Sison convened a meeting of the Emergency Action Committee to discuss the current situation and to adopt a series of "reverse tripwires" which will be used to consider if and when the Embassy Beirut Logistical Support Missions (EBLSM) from Cyprus should be discontinued. At this time, strong security concerns about the Beirut International Airport (BIA) remain and the EAC recommends continuation of the EBLSM for the time being. End Summary.

Security Updates

[12](#). (C) Political attention is focused on the Arab League-led discussions in Doha to be launched tonight. Embassy Beirut will continue to monitor these negotiations and the impact of discussions on the current security situation in Lebanon.

[13](#). (C) Greater Beirut and other areas of Lebanon are quiet today. We have had no reports of armed clashes. Contacts at the British and French embassies confirm this development.

Airport Issues

[14](#). (C) The Internal Security Forces (ISF) have confirmed that the BIA terminal is operational. Earthen berms and other barriers have been cleared from the access road and private citizens are proceeding to the terminal.

[15](#). (C) Middle East Airways (MEA) landed during the evening of March 15 and have continued flights today. In terms of western carriers, Air France landed earlier today carrying one of the embassy's unclassified pouches. A local cargo contractor was able to retrieve the pouch and transport to the embassy. We have reports that a British Airways flight is due to land later this evening. Lufthansa and Alitalia canceled flight today, as ground crew personnel still had difficulty reaching the terminal from their homes. We have been told that both airlines expect to resume normal flights tomorrow.

[16](#). (C) The Regional Security Office (RSO) has begun a

detailed study of the BIA security situation to determine the viability of this terminal for official USG personnel. The study is on-going and at this time, the EAC does not recommend that official USG personnel use this mode of travel. While we continue to analyze the information, we request continued embassy support via the EBLSM.

Consular Issues

17. (C) There has been a sharp decrease in the number of phone calls from concerned American citizens. As of 1700, we had only spoken to two citizens. As a result, we have decided to discontinue to American Citizens Services call center as of 2200 this evening. Our normal after-hours number will remain available to connect American citizens to the embassy duty officer.

18. (C) The embassy will re-open its non-immigrant visa processing on Monday, May 19 and the embassy has issued a press release to notify the public.

"Reverse Tripwires"

19. (S) At the request of S/ES-O/CMS and DS, the EAC approved a list of "reverse tripwires" which will be used to evaluate if and when the EBLSM should be discontinued.

-- Western commercial airlines announce a sustained return to "normal" flight schedules with five to seven flights daily to Western Europe.

-- Improved security situation leads to improved access to the BIA. Debris and barricades are removed from the BIA access roads.

-- Embassy motorcades can proceed to the airport without being stopped, questioned or inspected by militia checkpoints.

-- No overt and aggressive Hizballah presence near or inside the BIA terminal.

-- RSO is able to provide an adequate level of protection for embassy employees and official USG personnel transiting the airport.

-- Airport is open not just to commercial flights and not just for official USG personnel, but also grants diplomatic clearance for official USG aircraft to land.

110. (C) EAC notes that all of these conditions have not yet been met. A detailed security analysis is being performed and we require continued support from the EBLSM at this time.

We understand the logistical planning needs outlined by EUCOM colleagues and will continue to provide updates on our assessments in a timely manner.

SISON